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2012-02

CHDS Alum Part of White House Gathering

Center for Homeland Defense and Security

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/51278>



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CHDS Alum Part of White House Gathering

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The Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) was well represented as local, state and federal law enforcement professionals convened at the White House Jan. 18 to discuss the Obama administration's plan for countering violent extremism.

Eight of 46 law enforcement personnel attending the daylong event have ties to CHDS educational programs. The "Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners in the United States" was the topic of a day-long conference. The Department of Homeland Security-backed strategic initiative to counter violent extremism will couple the mass array of federal resources with local level methods that incorporate traditional community policing.



DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano and Attorney General Eric Holder attended the session, something seen by many observers as signaling the importance the administration is placing on the issue that has become the latest front in fighting terrorism.

"What was really positive was the fact that Napolitano and Holder showed 110 percent support for this topic," said alumnus Deputy Inspector Amin Kosseim of the New York City Police Department. "Countering violent extremism is an issue that is getting bigger every day. Local law enforcement really needs to focus on this. It's the wave of the future."

The plan also represents a shift in concern among law enforcement professionals that previously focused on terrorist cells that could be established in the United States.

"That's not the case anymore," observed CHDS alum Col. Keith Squires of the Utah Dept. of Public Safety / Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and a CHDS graduate. "When I was a student at CHDS, the main concern discussed was cells being established around the country. What I see now is that the greater threat comes from inspired individuals who only need a weapon and a familiar target."

Ronald Brooks, director of the Northern California Regional Information Center, also applauded the administration for its leadership in addressing violent extremists.

"We need to harness the power of law enforcement and our community organizations to deter violent extremism and to prevent or disrupt planned attacks by lone wolf and small cell, homegrown violent extremists who have been radicalized in our community, on the internet or in our jails," said Brooks, a graduate of the Fusion Center Leaders Program. "We're moving forward with further development of these strategies."

To the CHDS community, the actions called for in the implementation plan may sound familiar. During the meeting, Napolitano emphasized DHS' efforts to support local communities by enhancing existing partnerships to focus on information-driven community-based solutions, building government and law enforcement expertise, supporting community oriented policing practices and expanding grant prioritization to counter violent extremism and violent crime regardless of ideology.

"It's basically looking at community policing in a different style," Kosseim said. "You're out there to provide services to the community, particularly the Muslim community. They are part of the solution. They are the ones who are going to tell us when there is someone in the community who is not safe."

The community approach is more than law enforcement. The outreach component means getting to know the community, noted Kosseim. In New York he has done that type of outreach through the Police Activities League and establishing youth soccer and cricket leagues. Similarly, CHDS alum Dennis Jensen has worked in the St. Paul, Minn., area with the Somali community to combine community policing with outreach and activities for the Somali population. The outreach takes on an array of forms: sports in the newly formed Police Athletic League; tutoring and job training at the YWCA; women's programs through the St. Paul Intervention Project.

The Los Angeles Police Department developed a 24 hour curriculum on the topic and hosted a three-day pilot training with 40 local law enforcement officers from Los Angeles and San Diego County Jan. 25-27. LAPD Deputy Chief Michael Downing, commanding officer of the department's Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau, said the federal plan rightly puts state and local law enforcement at the forefront of combating violent extremism.

"State and local law enforcement always said this is really where we fit in best. Nobody is better position to deal with this decentralized threat than state and local law enforcement," said Downing, an Executive Leaders Program alumnus. "We know communities better than any other entity of government and we have the ability to do outreach with isolated communities."

DHS is continuing to implement recommendations from the DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, such as developing a curriculum for state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement focused on a community-oriented policing approach to countering violent extremism and violent crime. DHS' Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties also works to educate communities and state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement on cultural awareness across the nation.

Attendees to the White House meeting who have ties to CHDS include:

- Michael Downing – Los Angeles Deputy Police Chief, Executive Leaders Program 0902.
- Charles Ramsey – President of MCCA and Philadelphia Police Commissioner, Executive Leaders Program 0701.
- Amin Kosseim – Inspector, New York Police Department, MA 1001/1002.
- Keith Squires – Colonel, Utah Department of Public Safety and Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council Chair, MA 0701/0702 and Fusion Center Leaders Program 1101.
- Ronald Brooks – Director, Northern California Regional Intelligence Center, Fusion Center Leaders Program 1101.
- John Batiste – Chief of Police, Washington State Patrol, Fusion Center Leaders Program, 1102.
- Cathy Lanier – Chief of Police, Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department, MA 0401/0402.
- Aaron Kennard – Executive Director, National Sheriffs Association and Sheriff of Salt Lake County, Utah, (Retired), Executive Leaders Program 0801.
- Bart Johnson – Executive Director, International Association of Chiefs of Police, who is a founder of the CHDS Fusion Center Leader Program.